

Theft From Sheltered Housing

A teenage boy took keys from sheltered housing and stole money

Ryan moved to the local area with his family in order to live nearer another family relative. This relative resided in a local Scottish sheltered housing complex and the family was fortunate enough to be given the tenancy of a house nearby. It was not known if he had come to the attention of the police prior to moving to this region. However, since moving, Ryan had attracted the attention of the police for the theft of a bicycle, for which he received a Police Warning. Ryan was referred to the Reporter to the Children's Panel for breaking into the sheltered housing complex and stealing a considerable amount of money from the office and 6 keys to various flats within the complex. Over the next few days he used the keys twice to enter the flat of a young woman who suffered from learning disabilities and severe sight impairment. He stole the contents of her purse.

Home Visit

When a home visit was undertaken by Offence Resolution Programme staff, Ryan fully admitted the offence and was very apologetic for his actions. He worked with a Programme worker over a four-week period using a cognitive behaviour, modular programme approach to help him change his offending behaviour. He also agreed to meet with his victim face-to-face, to apologise for his actions and ask for forgiveness. Meanwhile work was also being carried out with the victim, and with her mother as her supporter. Through this dialogue, it became apparent that they also wanted to meet with the young person responsible, to gain an insight into why he had committed the crime and to alleviate their anxiety that he might commit another similar offence.

The Meeting

During the face-to-face meeting, Ryan gave an account of his actions and apologised for his behaviour. The victim was given the opportunity to ask questions and to inform Ryan of the consequences and effects his action had on her, and on her mother. The victim's mother also had the opportunity to share her views with Ryan, and how much she had been affected by this

incident. As the meeting progressed, the victim's mother began to ask questions about the juvenile justice system in Scotland, and found it difficult to accept that young people were not punished in the same way as adult offenders. A considerable amount of time was taken up explaining the justice system to her, but she remained extremely angry about the incident and this began to affect the restorative process. Ryan offered to repay the money to the victim over a period of time. The victim accepted this, but her mother still seemed to require punitive measures to be satisfied with the outcome. There was no compulsion or sanction with regard to the reparation agreement reached, but when Ryan defaulted on his payments, the victim's mother wanted additional sanctions applied. She contacted the Programme to express her disquiet with a system which seemed to advantage the young offender to the detriment of her daughter.